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SELECT COMMITTEE ON NARCOTICS ABUSE AND CONTROL

Congress of the United States House of Representatives

Washington, D.C. 20515

April 20, 1978

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Excellency, General Jorge Videla
President of the Argentine Republic
Buenos Aires, Argentina

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)
U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS
Margaret P. Grafeld, Director
 Release Excise Deny
Exemption(s): _____
Declassify: In Part In Full
 Classify as ___ Extend as ___ Downgrade to ___
Date _____ Declassify on _____ Reason _____

Dear Mr. President:

I am writing to express my gratitude for your recent decision to release Mr. Jacobo Timerman from prison.

As you know, I have had a longstanding interest and concern for the welfare of Mr. Timerman as an individual and also as an internationally respected journalist and defender of human rights. His worldwide reputation had led many to view your government's actions in this matter as an indication of its concern for and commitment to the full protection of human rights for all citizens of Argentina. The recent decision to release Mr. Timerman under house arrest is encouraging as a symbol of that commitment.

I am concerned, however, about a serious new threat to Mr. Timerman. Because of his interational reputation and steadfast opposition to terrorism, he has received death threats from extremists on both the right and the left. While his release under house arrest is much preferable to his past incarceration, this action will also place him in a highly dangerous and vulnerable position even with the security precautions the Government is instituting. My concerns stem from the recent series of attacks and killings of other less visable prisoners who have been similarly released. The size of the government's escort provided from Mr. Timerman at his release would indicate an acknowledgement of this threat.

I have been urging from the beginning, that Mr. Timerman not only be released, but be allowed to emigrate from Argentina if he so desires. Even though he remains under heavy guard, I am still fearful that he could be harmed during the period he remains detained under the national executive powers. If anything regrettable should occur to either Mr. Timerman or his

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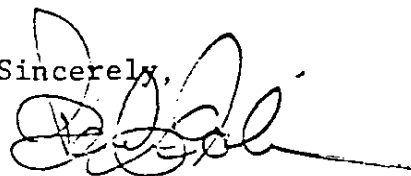
family the result would be to not only destroy the good will achieved by his release, but would cause serious repercussions for Argentina's reputation throughout the world.

Accordingly, I once again urge that he be allowed to emigrate not only for his sake, but also the good of Argentina.

Mr. Timerman's release comes during what must be recognized as a significant effort by your government to identify and release several thousand political prisoners. I would like to express my personal encouragement to you to continue these positive efforts as you continue to bring the extremists on both the right and the left under control. I urge you to insure that the progress that has been made to date is not allowed to slip away, but should proceed toward the full restoration of human rights for all citizens of Argentina and, hopefully, the eventual full restoration of democracy.

With best wishes,

Sincerely,



BENJAMIN A. GILMAN
Member of Congress

BAG:nc